SARON MONTHLY NEWSLETTER

Saron Evangelical Lutheran Church (ELCA)
510 Main Street
St. Joseph, Michigan 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Phone: 269-983-1273
Facebook:www.facebook.com/saronlutheranchurchst.joseph

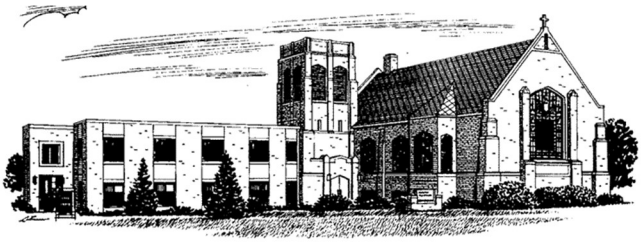
The Rev. Joan Oleson, Pastor
Home: 269-983-2475
Email: oleson@saronlutheran.org
Patrick Blanchard, Vicar
Cell: 616-460-7150
Email: pblanchard13@live.com
Marcus Roll, Music Director
Email: roll1mc@gmail.com
Irma Gorman, Organist
Amanda Bradley, Admin Assistant
Cell: 419-306-5780
Email: info@saronlutheran.org
Bradley717@gmail.com
Megan Savage, Bookkeeper
Email: financial@saronlutheran.org
Emily Gaul, Child Care

Typical Sunday at Saron:
Fall, Winter and Spring:
8:30am Worship On-Location
11am Worship with Zoom Option
Nursery Available
9:40 Learning Hour for Ages 2-Adult

Summer of 2022 (beginning June 5):
9:30am Worship
On-Location and via Zoom
Nursery Available
No Learning Hour

We hold in prayer:
The Rev. Elizabeth Eaton,
Presiding Bishop, ELCA
The Rev. Dr. Craig Satterlee, Bishop of the
North/West Lower Michigan Synod, ELCA
The Episcopal Diocese of Western MI

Our Companion Synods:
Christian Lutheran Church of Honduras
Lutheran Church of Papua New Guinea
Lutheran Church of Latvia
Saron's Mission: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!!*

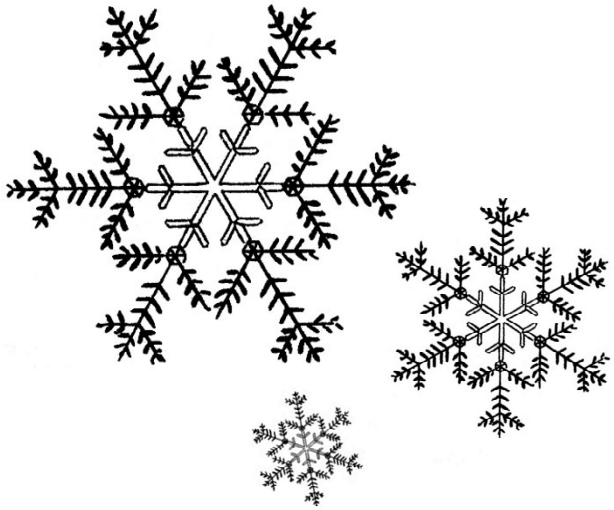


PASTOR ARTICLE FOR JANUARY 2022

I find great value in using the "assigned" lectionary texts for our Scripture readings each Sunday. It connects us to countless other Christian churches from all over the world who on any given Sunday are hearing the same stories. It gives me a basis for proclaiming the Gospel message through the sermon, without the worry of finding "just the right" text on a particular Sunday OR the risk of preaching on those passages that I like preaching on, while avoiding the hard texts.

So, while reading the lectionary texts this Advent season, I found myself a bit uncomfortable with preaching from another, a passage that went with the spiritual chosen for the given week, chosen as a way to experience the Christmas story through a different lens than our usual, that is through the experience of the slave and the spirituals they wrote. Uncomfortable? Maybe. And yet, I know that we are called to be uncomfortable at times, to hear the Gospel in unexpected ways, and to live the Gospel in ways that may surprise us. It is my prayer that our hearts and minds are open to experiencing and responding to the mysteries of God.

Pastor Joan



Update in Covid-19 Precautions
During the December council meeting, we decided to maintain the current Covid-19 precautions, which includes wearing masks in the building. We will continue to monitor the situation for appropriate adjustments.

General Information

OFFICE HOURS

Pastor Joan and/or Vicar Patrick
Monday-Thursday Mornings
Amanda Bradley (Admin Assistant):
Mondays & Thursdays 8am-noon
Wednesdays as needed
Helping Hands Office Volunteers:
Wednesdays 9:15am-11am (approx)
Megan Savage (Bookkeeper):
Tuesdays & Thursdays 5:30pm

When Pastor is out of town, emergency pastoral care information can be obtained by calling the church office (269/983-1273) or contacting the council president.

Note: Emails for Pastor should be addressed to oleson@saronlutheran.org to ensure privacy. Emails to Amanda and the church office should be sent to info@saronlutheran.org.

Caring and Sharing

IN OUR PRAYERS

Richard Schalon is at the Whitcomb Tower Retirement Center, St. Joseph; **Bernice Koski** and **Kathleen Preston** are at Woodland Terrace, Bridgman.

Happy Birthday Wishes to Saron's Members!
January 2022

Jan	2	Sophie de la Foret
	3	Richard Schalon
		Kealana Gulley
	4	Zachery Booth
		Kathleen Preston
	9	Anthony Kickles, Jr.
	14	T.J. Koehler
	15	Meredith Hammer
		Pat Breyen
		Colin Ashley
		Walter Schmuhl
	16	Jonah Rood
	18	Hayley Frey
	19	Kathie Nadeau
		Karen Hinckley
	23	Don Hafer
	24	Lyra Krall
	25	Karen Johnson
	28	John Taylor
	31	Cathleen Knauf

Happy Anniversary Wishes to Saron's Members!
January 2022

Jan	1	Charles & Linda Pater
	2	James & Jennifer Nicholas
	19	Steve & Denise Cook

"God's Blessings for a very happy day and year round!"

If there are any omissions from the birthday or anniversary list, or if a date is incorrect, please let us know so we can get it correct in the future!

THANK YOU

Ruth Ball was blown away by all the well wishes and signatures on the yard sign marking her 99th birthday. She was talking about it for days after with those that visited her.

Little things can make a big impact so thank you for taking time to help make her day extra special!

Saron's 2022 Annual Congregational Meeting will take place on **January 23 at noon in the sanctuary**, after a brief break at the conclusion of the 11am worship service. We will hear reports from each committee, elect members for the Congregational Council, Endowment Committee, and the Nominating Committee as well as persons to serve as voting members at this year's Synod Assembly. We will also review and vote to approve the proposed 2022 budget. All members are encouraged to attend. More information to come!

A NOTE FROM THE VICAR

As I write this note I am still trying to learn to pronounce "hygge." Is it "hoo – guh" or "hue – guh?" No matter how you say it, hygge has been an important time for me this season, a new way to experience Advent. In the imagined warmth of shearling slippers, a warm fire and a comfortable woolen blanket, I have let go of the cares of the day and focused on the more important areas of my life – my family, my friends and my community. As I wrote down people that I was concerned about and things I wished I had done differently I found myself totally absorbed in the moment. But then, that's what hygge is all about, isn't it? It is not easy to free our thoughts, especially during the very busy holiday season when we're preoccupied with so many things. I liked experiencing Advent with a different focus and hope to do the same next year.

I have to admit that one of my thoughts was about so many of you that I have met and those that I still look forward to meeting. I am still on my path of getting to know all of you and to be able to greet you by name. Thank you for being open and introducing yourself as I try to get to as many folks as possible each week. Relationships are so critical. God knows us all by name and calls each of us to reflect continuously on our relationship with God and with each other. My hope is that your holidays were filled with "hygee" moments.

May your new year be filled with wonder and curiosity as we pray, study and grow together.

Peace,
Vicar Patrick

FORTIFY & fly

The committee has selected the wood and fabric for the different seating styles we've ordered!

At the end of November 2021, we had collected $371,632 towards our 3-year pledge total of $367,205. So yes, thanks to some donations that were not included in the original pledge amount, we've hit 101%. That does not mean we are any less thankful for gifts that came in (and are still coming) during December and beyond. We are grateful for every dollar whether given in the beginning of the collection period in 2019 or after it technically has ended on December 31, 2021. We encourage everyone to joyfully fulfill their pledges as they are able. Watch for more information on how we will celebrate the completion of the 3 year Fortify & Fly collection period!

Worship

NURSERY

Nursery service is available during both services. In order to utilize the space most effectively, this option is most directed towards our youngest members and guests. For pre-school age children that occasionally need a little more physical and/or emotional space, quiet activities are available in the narthex. There are also clipboards with coloring pages and crayons, as well as children's bulletins, to assist kids as they transition into participating in worship. **It's vital to embrace having family units in all stages of life in our congregation and as such, we gladly welcome wiggles and giggles in worship!**

The primary goal of the nursery is to provide a safe environment when needed to facilitate a meaningful worship experience for families negotiating life with children. We recognize that may not look the same for everyone and are always open to hearing concerns and suggestions.

For health and safety reasons, only the approved childcare providers assigned for that day should be in the nursery space during worship. Nursing mothers are always welcome!

NEW MEMBERS

Please let Pastor know if you are interested in joining Saron, or would like to learn more about the Christian faith in the Lutheran tradition.

PRAYER GROUP

Join us Mondays at 11am for a time of quiet reflection and prayer, which includes lifting up the requests offered on Sundays at worship or via other means. We meet in the sanctuary.

ZOOM COFFEE HOUR

We will continue the Wednesday morning Zoom fellowship at 11am through the winter. The Zoom link remains the same from week to week and is at the bottom of the weekly email sent on Thursdays.

ALTAR FLOWERS

You can sponsor a week by using the link in the weekly email or by calling the church office. Make sure to note any special occasion to be recognized in the bulletin. Flowers are $35 per vase. Please follow up with a check to Saron with "Flowers" on the memo line. Thank you for helping to beautify our worship services! Feel free to take them home after the last service and enjoy. **Simply return the vase to Saron to be reused.**

FACEBOOK

We love to share pictures of Saron's ministry on our Facebook page and we get great feedback. It is our practice not to put names with the pictures. If you have questions, or prefer your picture not to appear, please contact Pastor.

SUNDAY SCRIPTURE READINGS

As you prepare for worship, you are invited to read and reflect on the Scriptures for the day.

January 2: Second Sunday of Christmas
Jeremiah 31:7:14
Psalm 144:12-20
Ephesians 1:3-14
John 1:1-18

January 9: Baptism of Our Lord
Isaiah 43:1-7
Psalm 29
Acts 8:14-17
Luke 3:15-17, 21-22

January 16: Second Sunday after Epiphany
Isaiah 62:1-5
Psalm 36:5-10
1 Corinthians 12:1-11
John 2:1-11

January 23: Third Sunday after Epiphany
Nehemiah 8:1-3, 5-6, 8-10
Psalm 19
1 Corinthians 12:12-31a
Luke 4:14-21

January 30: Fourth Sunday after Epiphany
Jeremiah 1:4-10
Psalm 71:1-6
1 Corinthians 13:1-13
Luke 4:21-30

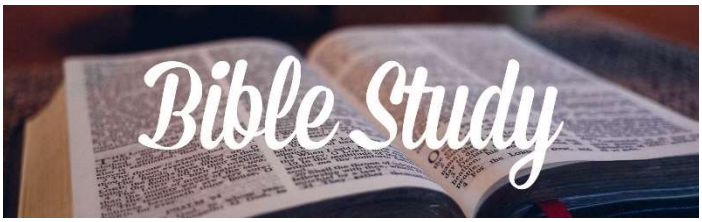
Youth

Our youth group met on December 12 to celebrate Christmas and share some cheer with the community. We signed Christmas cards to be sent to Saron shut-in members then designed a stack of original cards to encourage the weary medical staff at the hospital. Lots of fun & creativity! Pastor Joan will be delivering the cards with some snacks to the hospital. We also enjoyed a pizza lunch and some delicious homemade cookies (thank you Bradley family bakers!) and candy. We rounded out the day with a fun, noisy Super Mario Nintendo Switch competition! Our next event is planned for January 16 at 12:30pm.

Are you in grades 6-12? This group is for you! Contact Merrily at merrilyannsmith@gmail.com with any questions.

Learning

Saron is a congregation seeking to become more fluent in the first language of faith, the language of Scripture, in order that we might live into our calling as a people renewed, enlivened, empowered and sent by the Word.



SUNDAY LEARNING HOUR

We offer a time of age-appropriate Bible studies between the two services, from **9:40-10:30:**

- **Grades 5 and Under** meet in the Sunday school classroom.
- **Confirmation Students** (Grades 6-8) meet in the confirmation classroom.
- **Adult Forum** meets in the upstairs lounge.

At this time, we will be utilizing masks, per the current BCHD guidance. We look forward to seeing everyone!

We are always looking for volunteers to assist with Sunday School, even just once. Please contact the church office at 269/983-1273 or by email at info@saronlutheran.org with any interest.

TUESDAY EVENING BIBLE STUDY

We will resume our Tuesday evening sessions on January 4, 2022 at 6pm. Join us for an hour of study and discussion. Those who wish can then go to a local restaurant for food and more conversation. Note we will be meeting weekly during January and February then take a break during Lent.

"Iron Sharpens Iron and One Person Sharpens the Wits of Another"

If you have any questions, feel free to call, text, or email: Bob Kynast (269-921-2786, bobkynast@gmail.com) or Don Hafer (269-985-3637, hafer.don@gmail.com)

1ST SUNDAY BOOK DISCUSSION GROUP

We will not meet in January but resume, Sunday, February 6th, at 6:30pm in Saron's upstairs lounge. Details about wearing masks and having a Zoom component will be addressed in the February Newsletter. Our February selection is "Radium Girls" by Kate Moore*. During the years of the First World War, the newly discovered element of radium is touted as the wonder drug for medicine to cosmetics to tonic water. Hundreds of young women worked amidst the glowing dust of radium-dial factories, glad to have these coveted jobs until they began to fall mysteriously ill. Their story morphs into one of the biggest scandals of the early 20th century, and a "battle for worker's rights that will echo for centuries to come."* (Amazon)

Don't miss the discussion on this one! We welcome anyone interested to join us. Questions? Please contact Kathy Cowall at (269) 428-0354 or kcowall@hotmail.com.

"A word after a word after a word is power."
(Margaret Atwood)

MEN'S MONTHLY DEVOTION AND BREAKFAST

Saron Men's 1st Saturday Devotion and Breakfast
Saturday, January 8, 2022, 9am
Galley Grill Restaurant
4296 Red Arrow Highway in Stevensville

Contact Dennis Lundgren with any questions at dennis.lundgren@me.com

THURSDAY MORNING BIBLE STUDY

We will resume with a new study on **January 6, 2022**. The group meets on-location in Saron's upstairs lounge and simultaneously via Zoom on **Thursdays from 9:30am - 11am.**

January's study is entitled **"Fierce: Women of the Bible and Their Stories of Violence, Mercy, Bravery, Wisdom, Sex, and Salvation" by Alice Connor.** Cost of the book is $11.50. Contact Pastor with your order.

Women in the Bible aren't shy or retiring; they're fierce and funny and demanding and relevant to 21st-century people. These women's stories are messy, challenging, and beautiful. When we read their stories, we can see not only their particular, fearsome lives but also our own.

Please let Pastor know if you ever have any questions or need the Zoom link. **This class is open to all interested in attending.** You are welcome to join any time, for one session or for many.

SARON YOUTH DECEMBER 12 CHRISTMAS SERVICE

We could not be more pleased with how our Children's Christmas Service turned out this year! The high school age youth took on the roles of greeters, acolyte, ushers, and assisting minister. The middle schoolers provided leadership to the younger kids, guiding them through the selected message. And of course, the elementary and pre-school kids played their parts perfectly and were too cute for words. Thank you to all those who participated as well as the adults that facilitated the event, especially Jennifer, Pastor Joan and Amanda for prep, Lindsay and Beth for direction, Irma for music, and Mary for food. Lots of pictures at the end of the newsletter!

LIVING LUTHERAN MAGAZINE

It's time to renew your "Living Lutheran" subscription! The cost is $9. Please send cash with a note or a check with an appropriate memo. There is no official form - your payment is considered a subscription.

The Living Lutheran is the magazine of the ELCA and has lots of feature stories about ministry around the country, as well as ELCA news. Subscribing through Saron provides a significant cost reduction over individual subscriptions while still allowing it to be delivered directly to your home.

Women of the ELCA

SARON CHURCH WOMEN OFFICERS AND LEADERS

On Sunday, January 16, 2022, the following SCW officers and leaders will be installed:
President: Melanie McCammon
Vice President: Linda Pater
Secretary: Elizabeth Kunkel
Treasurer: Denise Cook
Mission Action Chair: Colleen Lundgren
Church Women United Representative: Irma Gorman
Deborah Circle Chair: Melanie McCammon
Dorcas Circle Chair: Irma Gorman

DEBORAH CIRCLE

We will **NOT** be having our usual Christmas party in January this year. We will, however, contribute to the Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen as usual. Details about that donation opportunity will be forthcoming.

Contact Melanie McCammon at 269/983-4622 for more information about this group.

Hospitality

SUNDAY SNACKS

Who doesn't love a snack during a time of fellowship in the narthex after the service? If you would like to be a Sunday snack host, sign up via the link in our weekly email or call/email the office so Amanda can sign you up. We are asking for donations of individual, store-packaged treats at this time. Please plan for 30 to partake. Thank you!

Outreach

NOISY OFFERING

We receive a noisy offering (or those not-so-noisy bills) on the first Sunday of each month. These gifts are sent to ELCA World Hunger. Thank you for your generous offerings!

BENTON HARBOR SOUP KITCHEN

Simple food, honestly sourced and lovingly made creates connections, gives fuel to the fight, and starves ignorance and apathy. - Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen

On Thanksgiving Day, 120 people at the Soup Kitchen were served a Thanksgiving dinner prepared by Grand Mere Inn. Rolls were provided by Saron and pies provided by Keith Stevens. The pies were donated in memory of his late wife, Jan, a longtime chair of Outreach at Saron and Saron's Soup Kitchen coordinator. Also, thanks to Deb Standen for her help, including pie preparation and distribution. Lastly, a belated thank you to Wendy King for baking cookies distributed at the October Soup Kitchen lunch.

If you feel comfortable helping to prepare a sack lunch at the Soup Kitchen or providing cookies, please use the link in the weekly email to sign up or contact Kathie Bradley (269-921-4665).

Thank you to all who continue to support this ministry with your time, contributions, and prayers: *Joyfully sharing God's love for all!*

When asked to fill a need, we are a congregation that steps up! As of December 16, we had committed to sponsoring 18 goats, 10 piglets, 10 honeybees, and 11 chicks. These gifts will be sent where they will do the most good.

It's not too late to get in on the action. Fill out a form in the narthex or call the office.

INCLUSIVITY TASK FORCE

The Inclusivity Task Force is committed to extending a welcome to all. Our congregation adopted the following welcome statement and is a **Reconciling in Christ** church.

As a community of faith who *joyfully shares God's love for all*, we believe our lives and faith are strengthened by diversity. We strive to be a community who welcomes people of every ability, age, citizenship status, ethnicity, gender identity and expression, language, marital status, political perspective, race, and sexual orientation. We are committed to the work of racial equity. Whatever life's circumstance, we openly welcome and value you. We celebrate God's unconditional love and respond joyfully to your presence here. All are welcome. You are welcome.

You will see the RIC logo on various communications and signage for our church. Watch for more updates about our continued inclusivity journey!

If you ever have any questions or need clarification, please feel free to call any one of the task force members:
Connor Ashley: cashley1837@outlook.com
Laurel Gacek: 269/470-6062 or mlmg2445@sbcglobal.net
Laura Hicks: 517/930-0579 or lhicks42@gmail.com
Darlene Kiessel: 269/313-4062 or kiessel@me.com
Diane Madej (Open Hearts. Open Church): 231/670-0328 or dianemadej234@gmail.com
Pr Joan Oleson: 269/983-1273 or oleson@saronlutheran.org

INTERFAITH ACTION

Interfaith Action (swmichiganinterfaith.org) is a coalition of over 40 faith communities in Allegan, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph, and Van Buren Counties. Some members of Saron attend meetings and work with various task force groups. One of the goals of Interfaith Action is to promote understanding and respect for diversity.

--Interfaith & Interwoven--

Want to get together, knit, and talk about what's unique about you and about what we all have in common? And also do good for people in need? We have a group for you!

Women of all ages (and handcraft abilities) from all faith and non-faith communities are invited to meet to dialogue about our traditions while creating hats, scarves, and mittens for persons in need. This group is similar to one that meets in Grand Rapids and the Berrien Springs Historical Society has offered to host the group.

If you have an interest, email swmichinterfaithaction@gmail.com for more information.

Support

The Support Committee will be meeting on the second Tuesday of each month at 8pm. Meetings will continue to be held on Zoom. Contact Don Hafer with any questions at 269/985-3637.

STOCK DONATIONS

Saron partners with TD Ameritrade, a brokerage firm, to accept stock donations. If you would like to donate stock, email Joe Ulrey at josephulrey@yahoo.com to receive more information. Thanks!

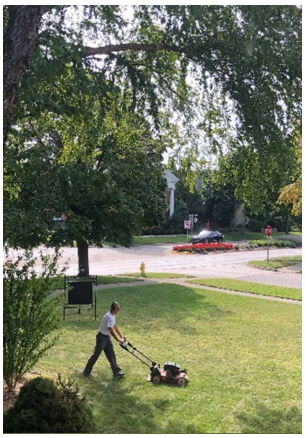
Facilities

HELPING HANDS (Previously Golden Hammers)

We do all sorts of things from building maintenance to preps for worship in the sanctuary to assembling bulletins and newsletters and so much more. We meet on Wednesdays around 9:30am and know you are invited – whatever your age, gender, or ability. There is a job for you to use your helping hands.

MOWING, FALL CLEANUP & CHRISTMAS PREP

Huge thank you to all those who volunteered to mow Saron's grass this past Spring, Summer, and Fall. It kept our grounds looking fabulous while saving us considerable money.



Thanks to all those who helped with Fall cleanup - Marilyn, Amy, Pastor, Brad, Ed, Jim, Jim, Steve, Dave, Matt, and Ken. Great job with the raking, trimming, edging, cleaning gutters, and putting the bench and table boards away for the season.

We appreciate all those that decorated Saron for the season, including assembly of the outdoor nativity.

It isn't easy to take care of a property of this size and in this location but when we come together, we get the jobs done quick and efficiently!

PIANO AVAILABLE

Do you or someone you know have need of a piano? Saron will have one available to a good home in exchange for the new owner arranging for its move. Contact the church office for more info.

Congratulations! Saron proudly accepted the certificate recognizing us as a Reconciling in Christ church.

Our fantastic choir works extra hard during the holiday season. We certainly appreciate it!

It takes a congregation of volunteers to get the church ready for Christmas, inside and out. It's worth the effort. Thanks again, everyone!

This room smelled SO good. Just saying.

January 2022

Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
2	**3** 11am Prayer Group	**4** 6pm Evening Bible Study	**5** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**6** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**7**	8 9am Men's Devotion & Breakfast
9 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**10** 11am Prayer Group	**11** 6pm Evening Bible Study 8pm Support Meeting	**12** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**13** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**14**	15
16 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**17** 11am Prayer Group 7pm Council Meeting **NEWSLETTER ARTICLES DUE**	**18** 6pm Evening Bible Study	**19** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**20** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir	**21**	22
23 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option 12pm Annual Meeting	**24** 11am Prayer Group	**25** 6pm Evening Bible Study	**26** 9:30am Helping Hands 11am Zoom Coffee	**27** 9:30am Bible Study 6pm Bells 7pm Choir **Benton Harbor Soup Kitchen Day**	**28**	29
30 8:30am Worship 9:40am Learning 11am Worship with Zoom Option	**31** 11am Prayer Group					

SARON LUTHERAN CHURCH
510 MAIN STREET
ST. JOSEPH, MI 49085

Website: www.saronlutheran.org
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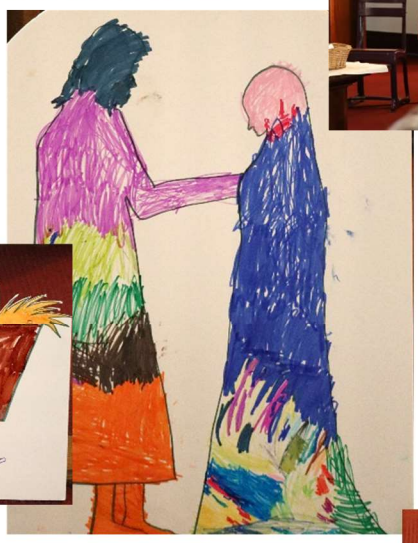
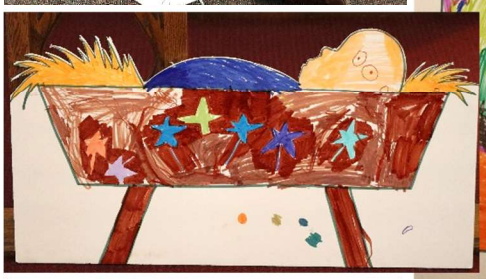
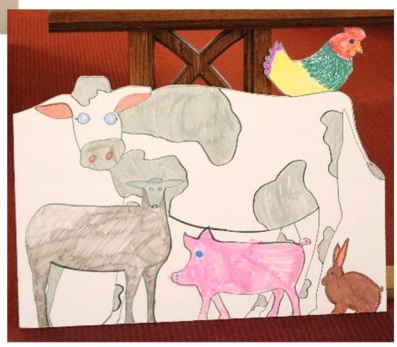
A Congregation of:
The North/West Lower Michigan Synod
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America

January 2022 Newsletter

2021 Youth Christmas Service